



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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Hansard 20 June 2001

**PROSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (10.06 p.m.): I rise tonight to oppose the Prostitution Amendment Bill 2001. The purpose of this bill strikes at the heart of the Prostitution Act 1999. Tonight I want to address a few inconsistencies raised by those who support the legislation. Local communities do have a say in prostitution; they have that say in state elections, not council elections. In March 1997 and March 2000 I ran successfully for local government on the Caloundra City Council. Not once was I asked any questions on prostitution. It is a state issue. Do members who support this legislation realise that they are wrong when they say that councils with a population over 25,000 do not have a say? The Caloundra City Council had a say, because communities or towns with a population under 25,000 were exempted from the legislation while I was a member of Caloundra City Council. In that region that would include areas such as Mooloolah, Beerwah, Maleny, et cetera. Yes, 25,000 may not be the perfect number, but what is? It gives small communities a say on whether or not they want this type of thing.

What is the other alternative? To bury one's head in the sand, take the high moral ground or say, 'We don't want it.' We have prostitution. We have had it for years. I live in a street which is also the home of a heroin-addicted prostitute who lives two doors up the road from me. I do not claim that the present legislation will fix all the problems that our communities face. What legislation offered by those opposite does that? During the speech of the member for Warrego the Opposition Leader interjected that I should report my concern about this prostitute who lives nearby to the local police. It was the Kawana Waters police who advised me of this woman's problems. Whilst I support section 64 of the Prostitution Act 1999 in delivering the power of veto to councils that have towns or communities with populations under 25,000, I cannot bring myself to support this legislation. It goes against the original legislation enacted by the Beattie government in 1999, which was wholeheartedly supported by the people of Queensland in the February 2001 election. Those opposite should add up the numbers. They should not shake their heads and bury them in the sand. They cannot be ostriches with their heads in the sand. The simple reason for allowing communities with fewer than 25,000 people to have the power through the local councils to say no is that we realise small communities may not want or have the need for brothels. Twenty-five thousand is a number that may or may not be perfect, but small communities may not want brothels.

I support the current legislation. Section 64 contains a provision whereby smaller communities are able to decide about the suitability of brothels in their community. It is reassuring to know that this government has delivered for small communities. Small communities need to be empowered in this regard, as the introduction of a brothel in their communities means local implications. This is due to the very fact that their communities are smaller and may be more close knit than are larger areas such as the Gold Coast, Caloundra, Maroochy, Kawana, Noosa and other areas—other areas that I have been elected to represent.

**Miss Simpson:** Noosa?

**Mr CUMMINS:** That is one area in a local government. No, I do not represent that area, but it has more than 25,000 people. I take the interjection; it just proves some ignorance.

**Miss Simpson:** Yours!

**Mr CUMMINS:** Members of the opposition said that it is councils over 25,000 that cannot oppose it. Well, they were wrong. Caloundra City Council sought exemptions and got them. So

opposition members should admit they are wrong when they are wrong. They do not even understand the 1999 prostitution legislation.

The Prostitution Act 1999 aims to respond to public discontent in relation to street soliciting. What is the answer of members opposite? What are they going to do? Are they going to ban it, like they banned gambling in the days of Joh Bjelke-Petersen? Members will remember that there was no gambling, yet the police could stop the traffic in the Valley and allow roulette tables to be lifted in by cranes! No, there was no gambling and no prostitution! It is not a perfect world. It is about time some of us took a reality check.

It is generally acknowledged that street sex workers who use illicit drugs are more likely to engage in unsafe practices. The member for Maroochydore stood up and said that the last person who slept with a prostitute could make her unclean. There are measures of protection—measures to make sure that infections are not carried on. This is part of the legislation. There is a potential threat to the health of the community—

**Mrs Pratt** interjected.

**Mr CUMMINS:** You are questioning my naivete?

**Mrs Pratt** interjected.

**Mr CUMMINS:** Oh, woman! You are beneath contempt.

The act further justifies the Beattie government's commitment to discourage street soliciting through rigorous enforcement initiatives, together with support and diversionary strategies. It is absolutely vital that the Police Service has a capacity to respond to the concerns of the public by enforcing the full weight of the law in respect of those who repeatedly breach the law.

The Prostitution Act 1999 aims to address the social factors behind prostitution and take the sex industry off the streets of our communities. The question has been asked: but what have we done? Only one brothel has been approved in Brisbane, so how can we judge it until it opens? It has only recently been approved by the council. Let us not put the cart before the horse. Let us come off the high moral ground and realise what the 21st century is all about. It is not that great.

I believe that members who vote for this know in their hearts that legal brothels and prostitution are here to stay, unlike the bad old days when we could deny that prostitution and gambling existed. They do exist. The passage of this bill would be to the detriment of the people of Queensland in terms of public health and the safety of sex workers and would destroy the foundation of the original legislation that was wholeheartedly supported by the people of Queensland in February 2001. For these reasons the bill must be opposed.

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